

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## President Obama Urges Leaders to Seek Lasting Peace in Imperfect World

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer

Washington — Saying that pursuing peace in an imperfect world is their greatest responsibility, President Obama called on world leaders at the United Nations to recommit to seeking a lasting peace — for nations and for individuals — that is built on a sense of justice and opportunity, of dignity and freedom.

“It depends on struggle and sacrifice, on compromise, and on a sense of common humanity,” Obama said September 21 in an address to the opening of the 66th Session of the U.N. General Assembly. World leaders began convening in New York on September 19 for the annual opening of the General Assembly, which serves to set a work agenda for the year and to highlight issues and challenges for the 193-member organization to tackle in the coming months.

South Sudan became the newest nation to be seated at the United Nations on July 14.

The array of issues that diplomats will address in protracted debate over the course of the year ranges from border disputes to battling the causes of noncommunicable diseases, to food security and nutrition, to poverty, to controlling the proliferation of nuclear weapons. As Obama highlighted in his 35-minute address, the most difficult challenge is forging lasting peace amid a world confronted by protracted conflicts.

“True peace depends on creating the opportunity that makes life worth living,” he said. “And to do that, we must confront the common enemies of humanity: nuclear weapons and poverty, ignorance and disease.”

“These forces corrode the possibility of lasting peace, and together we’re called upon to confront them,” Obama said.

### YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION

Obama told world leaders that the past year has been one of significant transformation as nations have cast off decades-old authoritarian regimes in pursuit of freedom and universal human rights. The United Nations was built in October 1945 as an organization not just to end one war, but to avert all other wars and to prevent conflict while seeking to address its causes, the president said.

“The fact is peace is hard. But our people demand it,” Obama told leaders in the cavernous General Assembly hall. “Over nearly seven decades, even as the United Nations helped avert a third world war, we still live in a

world scarred by conflict and plagued by poverty. Even as we proclaim our love for peace and our hatred of war, there are still convulsions in our world that endanger us all.”

Obama praised the transformations that have occurred in Côte D’Ivoire, Tunisia, South Sudan, Egypt and Libya, while also praising reforms in Bahrain. “America is a close friend of Bahrain, and we will continue to call on the government and the main opposition bloc, the Wifaq, to pursue a meaningful dialogue that brings peaceful change that is responsive to the people,” he said.

At the same time, Obama said, it has been a difficult decade for the United States — thrust into conflict in Afghanistan by terrorism and then into Iraq — but “the tide of war is receding.” When he became president in 2009, Obama said, there were approximately 180,000 U.S. military personnel serving in those countries, but by the end of this year that number will be cut in half and it will continue to decline. U.S. forces are being fully withdrawn from Iraq by the end of the year, and a gradual removal of forces from Afghanistan is beginning as the Afghan government and national security forces assume effective control of their own security, he said.

“So, yes, this has been a difficult decade. But today, we stand at a crossroads of history with the chance to move decisively in the direction of peace,” Obama told world leaders.

Obama warned, though, that progress toward a world free and whole can be reversed. The United Nations and its members must do their part to support the basic aspirations of people so that they can live in sustained freedom, dignity and security.

The president noted that Iran continues to refuse to recognize the rights of its own people, and that men and women and children are being tortured, detained and murdered by the Syrian regime. The United States, he added, has already imposed sanctions on Syria’s leaders and it supports a transfer of power that is responsive to the Syrian people.

America supports the aspirations of the people of Yemen for a nation free of corruption and violence, Obama said.

### MIDEAST PEACE

Obama told world leaders that there is no shortcut to resolve the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians that has endured for decades. “Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the United Nations,” he added.

“Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians who

must live side by side. Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians — not us — who must reach agreement on the issues that divide them: on borders and on security, on refugees and Jerusalem,” Obama said.

Obama said the United States wants the Palestinian people to have full statehood, but to achieve that goal will require negotiations between the two peoples. The integrity, security and sovereignty of the Israelis and Palestinians must be respected and must be recognized by both sides.

“Each side has legitimate aspirations, and that’s part of what makes peace so hard,” Obama said. “And the deadlock will only be broken when each side learns to stand in the other’s shoes, each side can see the world through the other’s eyes.”

### **President Obama, Secretary Clinton Welcome Release of U.S. Hikers from Iran**

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said all Americans are celebrating with the families of Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal following their release from more than two years of detention in Iran.

Bauer and Fattal were met by their families in Oman after Iranian authorities agreed to release them from custody on September 21.

President Obama, welcoming their release in a September 21 statement, said he is “very pleased that they are being reunited with their loved ones.”

“The tireless advocacy of their families over these two years has won my admiration, and is now coming to an end with Josh and Shane back in their arms,” he said.

The president thanked Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, the Swiss government and others who have “worked steadfastly over the past two years to secure the release of Shane and Josh.”

In a separate statement, Clinton also welcomed the release of Bauer and Fattal from detention and their reunion with their friends and families.

“I am grateful for the efforts of all those who have worked for their release, in particular the Swiss Protecting Power in Tehran, the Omani government, the Iraqi government, and the many other world leaders who have raised their voices in support, as well as those inside Iran who pushed for justice,” she said.

Bauer and Fattal, along with a third American, Sarah

Shourd, were visiting Kurdish northern Iraq and hiking near the unmarked border with Iran when they were arrested July 31, 2009. Shourd, who became engaged to Bauer while in Iranian custody, was released in September 2010.

The Obama administration repeatedly and steadfastly denied assertions by Iranian officials that the hikers were spies. Clinton said August 21 that U.S. officials were “deeply disappointed” after Iranian judicial authorities sentenced Bauer and Fattal to eight years in prison after the two were held in Evin prison without charge for two years.

The families of the three hikers issued a statement September 21 describing Bauer and Fattal’s release as “the best day of our lives.”

“We have waited for nearly 26 months for this moment and the joy and relief we feel at Shane and Josh’s long-awaited freedom knows no bounds,” they said.

The families thanked Oman’s Sultan Qaboos bin Said and his envoy Dr. Salem Al Ismaili, as well as the hikers’ lawyer in Iran, Masoud Shafii, and Swiss authorities in Tehran, including Ambassador Livia Leu Agosti, for “working to make today a reality.”

They also said that support from people around the world “has sustained us and comforted us throughout this time.”

### **Federal Reserve Acts to Boost U.S. Economy**

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. Federal Reserve will buy up about \$400 billion of longer-term Treasury securities by the end of June 2012 as part of an effort to boost the sagging U.S. economy and help the housing market.

The Fed will sell short-term Treasury securities of three years or less and buy an equal amount of Treasury securities that mature in a range from six years to 30 years. It is a rebalancing of the Fed’s \$2.87 trillion portfolio of securities aimed at helping to lower mortgage interest rates and rates on consumer and business loans. The move is also intended to get investors to move into corporate bonds and stocks while not increasing consumer prices.

“Recent indicators point to continuing weakness in overall labor market conditions, and the unemployment rate remains elevated,” the Fed said in a statement released September 21. “Household spending has been increasing at only a modest pace in recent months despite some recovery in sales of motor vehicles.”

"Investment in nonresidential structures is still weak, and the housing sector remains depressed," the Fed added.

The Federal Open Market Committee, the policymaking arm of the Federal Reserve System, said the action it agreed to take should put "downward pressure on longer-term interest rates" and help to improve broader financial conditions.

The Fed also said it will reinvest payments from its holdings of mortgage agency debt and agency-backed securities to help further boost the housing market. The Fed said it would keep its target range for the federal funds rate charged to banks for overnight loans at 0 to 0.25 percent.

Four Republican leaders in the U.S. Congress raised concerns in a letter to the Federal Reserve that further action could worsen economic conditions. They argued that previous efforts by the Federal Reserve have not improved the employment rate in the United States, and they expressed concern that further actions could increase inflation.

The Fed said in its statement that "longer-term inflation expectations have remained stable. Inflation appears to have moderated since earlier in the year as prices of energy and some commodities have declined from their peaks."

The unemployment rate in the United States stood at 9.1 percent in August, and the nation's gross domestic product rose by a modest 0.7 percent in the first half of 2011.

The Federal Open Market Committee said that it continues to expect some pickup in the pace of the current recovery over the coming quarters, but that the unemployment rate will decline only gradually.

### **U.S., Asia-Pacific Strengthen Security, Trade, Economic Relations**

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — The United States is taking a comprehensive approach to strengthening security, trade and economic ties with the Asia-Pacific region, says Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell.

"Much, if not most, of the history of the 21st century will be written in Asia, and the United States wants to be a full part of that history going forward," Campbell said September 21. The assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs held a briefing at the New York Foreign Press Center on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

He said President Obama has met during the assembly with several Asia-Pacific leaders, including President Benigno Aquino of the Philippines, Mongolian President Tsakhia Elbegdorj and Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda of Japan.

Obama and Noda held a "substantive and very efficient" bilateral meeting September 20, according to National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Danny Russel, who joined Campbell during the September 21 briefing.

Russel said the two leaders discussed the global economy, regional trade agreements and shared security issues. Campbell added that during the talks, Noda thanked Obama for continued U.S. support in the aftermath of Japan's devastating March earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster. Obama pledged the United States will continue to stand together with the Japanese people as they recover.

Campbell said Obama also "very strongly affirmed" the Japanese decision to enter into the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction and urged the country to promptly implement legislation to meet the convention's standards.

The assistant secretary said Obama discussed with all Asia-Pacific leaders steps to move forward on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an agreement that seeks to open trade in the area to support new jobs, strengthen regional relations and eventually create a free-trade area. It also sets modern trade standards, including ensuring worker rights and protecting the environment. U.S. leaders cited "significant progress" in the latest round of negotiations on the agreement, which concluded in Chicago September 15.

Russel said 2011 has been, and will continue to be, an "active and dramatic year" for U.S.-Asia-Pacific relations. He noted the United States has committed to institutions across the region in an effort to improve relations both with existing partners, such as China and Japan, and new powers, such as Indonesia.

In July, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton participated in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional forum in Bali. Obama will host the 19th annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders in Honolulu November 12-13 and will attend the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit in Bali November 17-19.

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